



# Winter Driving Safety

The leading cause of death during winter storms is transportation accidents. Preparing your vehicle for the winter months and knowing how to react if stranded or lost on the road are the keys to safe winter driving.

## BEFORE YOU TRAVEL

- Pre-plan your trip with scheduled rest stops and overnight stops. If you are a member of an auto club, they will usually provide prepared road maps with marked places to stop.
- Winterize your car by having a mechanic check the following:
  - Battery
  - Antifreeze
  - Lights
  - Brakes
  - Exhaust system
  - Ignition system
  - Hazard lights
  - Thermostat
  - Heater
  - Defroster
  - Oil level
  - Wipers
  - Windshield washer fluid
  - Good winter tires
- Always maintain at least a half a tank of gas
- Keep a bag of sand or cat litter in your trunk. It will provide extra weight, helping to minimize sliding and also can be used to create traction on icy roads.
- Let someone know your travel plans and route. Periodically check in with that person.
- Pay attention to weather advisories and avoid in harsh conditions.
- **Never** use cruise-control on wet or icy roads.
- Assemble a disaster supplies kit for your car which includes the following:
  - First-aid kit
  - Portable radio
  - Shovel and ice scraper
  - Flashlight and extra batteries
  - Blankets and warm clothing
  - Flares
  - Matches
  - Bottled water and non-perishable, high-energy food

## TRAVELING

- Always wear your seat belt.
- Maintain a safe distance between you and other vehicles.

- Before driving and while on the road, avoid eating heavy meals as this can lead to sleepiness.
- Get a good night's sleep before traveling. If you feel sleepy while driving, pull over and rest before driving more. Cold air, coffee, and music may help, but studies show that driving while sleepy is a danger that can only be cured by sleeping.

#### **IF YOU GET STUCK**

- Stay with your car -- don't attempt to walk to safety.
- Tie a brightly colored cloth to the antenna for rescuers to see.
- Start the car and use the heater for 10 minutes each hour. Keep the exhaust pipe clear so fumes will not back up into the car.
- Keep one window slightly open to let in air.
- Leave the overhead light on when the engine is running so you can be seen.
- As you sit, keep moving your arms and legs to stay warm and keep blood circulating.
- Dress warmly. Wear layers of loose fitting, light weight clothing.
- If more than one person is in the car, take turns sleeping. Huddle together for warmth.
- Use newspapers, maps, and the removable car mats for insulation.



**Division of Employee Safety and Health**  
Department of Administrative Services  
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet